6: Mousset H-4 (no date) 1950 E16 Slavic Peoples E16

829 a nostalgic halo. It was no doubt the manifestation of Russian spiritual life which was responsible for the wildest craze in [535] France. At the beginning of this century, Serge Daghilev's ballets had a pronounced effect, not only on choreography, but • [533] also on the decorative arts. Music and the dance were, for a decade or two, the messengers of Russian civilisation which met with the best reception. This means that they reached only an *élite*. Naturally, this is not the place to trace the history of the penetration of the Russian genius into France; we can only note those of its revelations in which, according to current opinion, a specifically Slavonic character could be recognised.

As for the political manifestations, they awakened more curiosity than understanding. The visit of the Russian sovereigns to Paris in 1896 aroused the enthusiasm of a crowd which seems to have seen mainly its exotic aspect. Amusing as it may seem, moreover, what little popularity Imperial Russia enjoyed in France was due to Jules Verne's novel, *Michel Strogoff*. An anthology could be made of the works of pure imagination which have moulded the images under which nations see each other. (*Carmen*, for instance, still sums up all that many French people know of Spain.) The figure which, to the Russians, has long represented the average Frenchman, is borrowed from the younger Dumas and from . . . Paul de Kock, whose novels enjoyed, in Russia, a vogue we have never suspected.

186* Of the other Slav countries—except Poland, the cult of which was kept alive by romanticism and sacred eloquence—we knew practically nothing. It is in the *Intermédiaire des chercheurs et des curieux* that we find particulars of the two dynasties which disputed the throne in Serbia—just as though these were events taking place in the Antipodes! It was not only the political scene that Russia monopolised; her spiritual brilliance threw into the shade the other Slavonic peoples, whose aspirations—whose very existence even—were revealed to the average Frenchman by the 1914–1918 War. These peoples occupied an as yet unexplored suburb of Europe. To which of them did the famous 'Slavonic charm', discussed in French society, refer? Most certainly, not to the hard-working, rather reserved Czechs, nor to the Bulgars, distrustful and positive. Perhaps to a certain section of Polish society—but, more probably, to refugees who had long since lost all contact with their native soil.

6: Mousset H-4 (no date) 1950 E16 Slavic Peoples E16

186* 814 In Russia, this same year 1942 saw an unprecedented output of works on Slavonic history and philology. Nicolas Derjavin studied Slavonic palæology, Russo-Bulgarian intellectual relations, the origin and history of the Slavs up to the eleventh century. The literature and history of the Slavonic nations were included in the syllabus of the High Schools; a chair of Slavonic Philology was created in the University of Leningrad; in May, 1942 the chair of Slavistic in the University of Moscow became a 'centre of studies in the history of the Slavonic peoples and of their role in intellectual evolution and in progress'.

186 608 829 The Ethnographical Institute of the Academy of Sciences undertook a huge investigation into the origin of the Slavonic settlements. A Tass Agency communication of July 4, 1943, announced the first results of this inquiry; the Slavs were aboriginals, not invaders. Professor Gudaltov proved that they descended from tribes settled between the Elbe and the Vistula. He pointed out the direct relationship between the Scythians of the Dnieper and the Polanes who played a decisive role in the formation of the State of Kiev.

186 • 533 536 Literature, the theatre, the arts, vied with each other in contributing to this revival of Slavonic spiritual life. An exhibition of the theatrical art of the Slavonic nations was held in Moscow in July, 1942. Chebalin's *Slavonic Quartet* obtained the Stalin Prize in 1943. The Musicians' Congress, which met in Moscow in January, 1943, praised Victor Belyi's 'Slavonic Suite' (Hymn of Anger, Serbian Guerrilla, To Arms!), the libretto of which, borrowed from Serbian folklore literature, is the work of the Montenegrin poet, Radoul Stiyensky.

186* 575 668 But the essential task remained a political one. Five committees were formed, for liaison with sympathisers in the allied countries—Panslav Committee, Youth Committee, Committee of Savants, Feminine Committee, Jewish Committee. The Panslav Committee launched message after message to oppressed Slavs, insurgent Slavs, Slavs in exile. They received from the Yugoslav Vetché—a political organisation struggling with Tito for independence—a telegram thanking them for their assistance with a view to the establishment of a 'Democratic Yugoslavia, federal and equal in rights', which concluded as follows: 'Long live the fraternal solidarity of all the Slavs in the struggle against German Fascism!'